Feudal society replaced by kings hence, taxation and the beginning of central governments that thought some cultural stability. Paris becomes the center for Gothic art/architecture—Scholasticism. The great cathedrals erected throughout Europe in the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries are the enduring symbols of the Gothic age. Growing importance of the “cult of the virgin” (churches built to Notre Dame) These towering structures are eloquent testimonies to the extraordinary skill of the architects, engineers, carpenters, masons, sculptors, glassworkers, and metal smiths who constructed and decorated the buildings.

Most of the architectural components of Gothic cathedrals appeared in earlier structures, but the way Gothic architects combined these elements made these buildings unique expressions of medieval faith.

The key ingredients of the Gothic “recipe” were rib vaults with pointed arches, flying buttresses, and huge colored-glass windows. Our “exploded” view of a typical Gothic cathedral illustrates how these and other important Gothic architectural devices worked together.

**The Vocabulary of Gothic Architecture**

1. Flying buttresses: Masonry struts that transfer the thrust of the nave vaults across the roofs of the side aisles and ambulatory to a tall pier rising above the church's exterior wall. Compare the cross section of Bourges Cathedral.

2. Pinnacle: A sharply pointed ornament capping the piers of flying buttresses; also used on cathedral facades.
3. Vaulting web (Severy): the masonry blocks that fill the area between the ribs of a groin vault.

4. Diagonal rib: In plan, one of the ribs that form the X of a groin vault. In the diagrams of rib vaults on page 382, the diagonal ribs are the lines AC and DB.

5. Transverse rib: A rib that crosses the nave or aisle at a ninety-degree angle (lines AB and DC in the diagrams on page 382)

6. Springing: The lowest stone of an arch; in Gothic vaulting, the lowest stone of a diagonal or transverse rib.

7. Clerestory: The windows below the vaults that form the nave elevation’s uppermost level. By using flying buttresses and rib vaults on pointed arches, Gothic architects could build huge clerestory windows and fill them with stained glass held in place by ornamental stonework called tracery.

8. Triforium: The intermediate story in a standard High Gothic three-story nave elevation consisting of arcades, usually blind but occasionally filled with stained glass.

9. Nave arcade: The series of arches supported by piers separating the nave from the side aisles.

10. Compound pier with shafts (responds): Also called the cluster pier, a pier with a group, or cluster, of attached shafts, or responds, extending to the springing of the vaults.

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